/20 cont./

565 608 In the house of the child's parents, another banquet is held, to which the neighbors are also invited. On this occasion all kinds of honors are shown to the foster mother and her husband. The foster parents are granted the right to be the first to wash their hands, and upon their return home the parents of the child must seat them on their horses, i.e., when they mount, the stirrups on the other side must be held. The foster parents return home with [431] the child, loaded with all kinds of presents, animals, clothes, money.

The foster child remains with the foster parents during the course of eight or nine years, and then it is taken to the real parents. It hardly need be said that the child, having spent its early years in someone else's home, where it grew up and learned to walk, talk, and to love its foster mother and those surroundings, now has difficulty in adjusting itself to the new situation -- at • [154] first the father's house seems almost like a prison to him. For this reason the child is allowed to visit the foster parents frequently. If the foster child is an orphan, however, he remains in the home and under the care of his foster parents until he is married.

/21/ The foster child is obligated to defend the interests of the foster parents, i.e. of that family whose members reared him. He is required, for instance, to search for a lost article belonging to his foster parents, to find the thief and to call him to account, and it is a great disgrace to him if he is unable to do this. In the same way, if someone offends the foster parents and they are not strong enough to pay back the insult, their ward must stand up for them. Let us suppose, for instance, that some prince has beaten a peasant. In this case the ward of the injured peasant must de- [683] mand satisfaction, not from the princely offender himself, for "his blood is unequal to that of a peasant," but from his foster parent, a peasant, and he is the one who has to answer for the insult inflicted upon the foster parent of another prince. If a peasant foster-father gets into any kind of trouble, his princely ward endeavors by hook or by crook to rescue him from his difficulties. In such cases, if the ward himself is still immature and unable to help his foster parents, then his parents act in his place.

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608 565 peasants also rear the children of clergymen, of merchants, and even of other peasants. There are also cases of even nobles taking in and rearing the sons of strong and influential princes on the same basis.

IV.

Marriage

583 Some fifteen years ago the groom usually abducted a girl for a wife; that is to say, without the consent of the girl's parents or her own consent, he carried out an attack upon her with the help of his comrades and led her away by force. Such cases are rare nowadays. On the contrary, abductions are now for the greater part carried out with the consent of the bride herself, though not infrequently against the will of her parents. In the latter case, the one chosen as a bride comes at night to a previously arranged place a few versts from the parental home. The groom comes to the same place with his comrades, on horses. She mounts a horse brought especially for her, and the whole cavalcade gallops back to the home of the groom or to that of some influential person. No pursuers are able to take the bride away from the abductors, for they are prepared, if necessary, to fight to the last drop of blood for her. Soon after the abduction the girl herself announces publicly that the abduction took place according to her personal wishes and that she can be happy only with her abductor. Mutual negotiations are now [584] initiated and everything ends in peace; the son-in-law brings presents to the mother and the father of the bride, and the case is closed.

584 583 [558] It must be noted that the Abkhaz never abducts a girl lower in standing than himself. This would be considered a loss of honor for the abductor. On the contrary, everybody tries to abduct a girl of higher or at least equal birth. To propose to a [154] girl and to receive a refusal either from her or from her parents

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584 is considered a mortal insult; /24/ in this case abduction is con-
[583] sidered the only way of satisfying one's injured self-esteem. But
[54] usually marriage negotiations are conducted in Abkhazia by female matchmakers or by intermediaries. If they bring the matter to a happy conclusion, their labors are rewarded with the
[465] heads and hides of the oxen that are butchered for the wedding. As soon as a mutual understanding has been reached, the bride and groom, after an exchange of presents, set a day for a meeting.

At the designated time, the groom and his friends set out, with presents, for the house of the parents of the bride. A
[583] princely groom sometimes brings as many as 20 or 30 horses, of which many are saddled. Now a feast is held at the groom's
[574] expense. During the banquet the friends of the groom, on the one hand, and those invited by the bride's parents, on the other, try in all possible ways to outdo each other in witticisms, puns, eloquence, in the amount of wine consumed, in singing, etc. The next day the comrades of the groom receive various presents and the groom himself receives a horse, or money and arms. Then the comrades return home, while the son-in-law remains in the house of the bride's parents with his delegate (dade).

But the future son-in-law still feels extremely ill at ease. According to the custom of the country, he may not yet show himself to the parents of the bride or their relatives. He is wrapped in a burka, and his head and face are wrapped in a bashlyk, under which only his eyes are barely visible. On the first night, during the feast, he hides himself somewhere outside and spends the night in a neighboring house. On the next day he is forcibly taken to the bride's house. But even now he does not dare to sit down and remains standing by the door, leaving it to his delegate to speak for him. In general it is not
[606] proper for the young son-in-law to eat with his parents-in-law, or sometimes even to sit down with them at the table. In some places, husband and wife never appear together before the wife's parents. This is considered shameful.

The bride takes up residence in a small house (amhara),